

Preliminary Purpose and Need

Bureau of Land Management- Missoula Field Office Resource Management Plan

Goals

The RMP decisions establish goals and objectives for resource management and the management direction needed to achieve these goals and objectives. In the planning process, goals are broad statements of desired outcomes that usually are not quantifiable. In the NEPA process, the “purposes for action” describe what the BLM hopes to accomplish in the planning effort. Both the BLM planning regulations and the CEQ NEPA regulations seek to integrate the planning and NEPA processes.

With this in mind, and because the nature of ‘goals’ in the planning process and the nature of the ‘purposes for action’ in the NEPA process, the two are the same and the goals for this RMP revision are equivalent to the purposes for action, which are described later in this document.

Need

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) requires that the BLM “develop, maintain, and, when appropriate, revise land use plans” (43 United States Code [U.S.C.] 1712 (a)). The Garnet RMP has guided BLM’s management of public lands in this area for the past 29 years. Resource conditions and public demands have changed substantially in the past decades. The five-year (July 16-18, 1991) and fifteen-year (April 17-19, 2001) plan evaluations conducted for the Garnet RMP highlighted a need to revisit plan decisions due to new circumstances and policies.

Thus, the need for revision stems from new or changing resource conditions, shifting demands for resource uses, new issues, and new information since the development of the Garnet RMP including:

- Regional strategies that address special status species including the Canada lynx, NCDE grizzly bear, and bull trout (all listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act) have been written or updated.
- Forest vegetation and ecosystem resilience, including terrestrial and aquatic habitats, has wavered in the context of climate change, insect infestation, fire, and other disturbances contributing to forest conditions that are outside the historic range of variability.
- Increasing community emphasis on recreation and the development of new recreation-related technologies have created a need for exploring potential and existing recreation opportunities.

- Inventories for multiple resources including lands with wilderness characteristics and visual resources have been updated.
- The forest products industry has seen fluctuating timber supply, market conditions, and reductions in the number of mills.
- Recently acquired public lands need management direction, and increased demand for access to public lands.
- Evaluate proposed and existing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) and other special designations, including corridors for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

All of the needs trigger a broader need for a more comprehensive framework for managing public lands and resources administered by the Missoula Field Office for the foreseeable future.

Purpose

The purpose of the Missoula RMP revision is to make land use plan decisions to guide the management of BLM-administered lands. The FLPMA requires that the management be “on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield unless otherwise specified by law” (43 U.S.C. 1701 [Sec. 102.a.7.]). The following purposes describe the Field Office’s distinctive role and contributions to the western Montana landscape.

1. Improve public access and resource management

The purpose of the action includes improving public access and resource management through a consolidated land base. The FLPMA requires, in part, that the “public lands be managed in a manner that will...provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use” (43 U.S.C. 1701 [Sec. 102.a.8]). The FLPMA also requires the “acquisition of non-federal land for public purposes and the exchange of such lands...be consistent with the prescribed mission of the...agency involved” (43 U.S.C. 1701 [Sec.102.a.10]).

2. Maintain or restore ecological sustainability for vegetation ecosystems and terrestrial and aquatic wildlife habitat

The purpose of the action includes improving and restoring ecological sustainability/resiliency. The FLPMA also requires, in part, that the “public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of... ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource values...;that, where appropriate, will preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition; that will provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals...” (43 U.S.C. 1701 [Sec. 102.a.8]).

Landscape patterns and forest conditions are resilient, having the capacity to maintain or regain normal functioning and development following future disturbances (such as natural succession, fire, insects and disease, invasive species, floods and droughts) or in the face of future climate changes. The vegetation mosaic across the plan area is dynamic, varying greatly over time as vegetation is influenced by site conditions and responds to climate changes and ecological processes such as natural succession, fire, insects and disease, invasive species, floods and droughts.

The diverse vegetation mosaic supports a variety of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species on the landscape, especially for the bull trout (listed threatened), bull trout critical habitat, Canada Lynx (threatened), Canada lynx critical habitat, grizzly bear. Contributing to the conservation and recovery of listed species is required by the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and is essential to delivering a predictable supply of opportunities for resource uses (recreation, timber, minerals, and livestock grazing). Providing clean water is essential to the conservation and recovery of listed fish.

3. Provide for recreation opportunities

The purpose of the action includes providing recreation opportunities. The FLPMA requires that, among other uses, “the public lands be managed in a manner that will...provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use” (43 U.S.C. 1701 [Sec. 102.a.8]). Demand for recreation is growing throughout the planning area and the broader western Montana.

4. Provide for economic opportunities through recreation, timber harvest, livestock grazing, minerals exploration and development, and support local infrastructure needs

The purpose of the action includes providing economic opportunities. The FLPMA requires that, among other uses, “the public lands be managed in a manner which recognizes the Nation’s need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber and fiber from the public lands” (43 U.S.C. 1701 [Sec. 102.a.12]). The BLM will provide Local communities and regional economies a reliable source of economic opportunities created from recreation, timber, livestock grazing, and mineral development on BLM-administered lands. Manage for social and scientific values (e.g., cultural, paleo, special designations, lands with wilderness characteristics, visual, etc.)

The FLPMA requires, in part, that the ““public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical... and archeological values....” (43 U.S.C. 1701 [Sec. 102.a.8]).

5. Manage for Social and Scientific Values (e.g. Cultural, Paleo, Special Designations, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, Visual, Safety, etc.)

The FLPMA requires, in part, that the “public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical... and archeological values....” (43 U.S.C. 1701 [Sec. 102.a.8]).